

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A method for controlling the time which a user spends connected to a data communication network, comprising the steps of:

upon connection of a user to a data communication network, determining  
5 a profile of the user by determining an age group to which the user belongs;

calculating a time that said user has spent connected to the data communications network and comparing said connection time with a table which contains connection times which are predefined according to different age groups of the user;

10 if said connection time is greater than a maximum allowable time for the age group of said user, automatically interrupting the connection to said data communications network.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of calculating said connection time comprises the step of calculating said connection time by  
15 taking into account all the connections established during a given time interval, said connection time being constituted by a sum of connection times of all of said connections.

3. The method according to claim 2, further comprising a step of taking into account a time elapsed between a connection to the data communication  
20 network and a subsequent connection, said elapsed time being at least equal to a duration of the connection that has just ended, multiplied by a constant according to the age group of said user.

4. The method according to claim 3, wherein if said elapsed time is correct, a subsequent connection is authorized.

25 5. The method according to claim 1, wherein a total duration of the connections established by the user during said given time interval cannot exceed a maximum connection time that is allowable in relation to the age group of said user.

30 6. The method according to claim 5, wherein said table that contains maximum allowable connection times according to the age group of said

user is determined in advance by the provider of the services for connection to the data communication network.

7. The method according to claim 6, wherein said table that contains the maximum allowable connection times according to the age group of said user can be predefined by the users.

8. A device for controlling a time that a user spends connected to a data communications network, comprising:

means for identifying a profile of the user connected to said data communication network;

10 means for calculating a time for which said user is connected to said data communication network;

means for comparing said connection time with a table which contains maximum allowable connection times according to an age group of said user;

15 means for automatically disconnecting said user from said data communication network if said user connection time exceeds said maximum allowable connection time for the age group of said user.

9. The device according to claim 8, wherein said means for calculating the time that said user spends connected to the data communication network comprise means for calculating a sum of the connection times of successive connections established by the user over a given time interval and means for calculating a time elapsed between one connection established by the user and a following connection.